

Newsletter - March 2009

An Appeal to all our Members

As you will see from the items that follow, the Mill has won a place in the affections of local residents and visitors and continues to attract support. However, we cannot rest on our laurels. The Trust membership has remained almost unchanged for several years now and we need to increase it if the future of the mill is to be secured. Enclosed with this newsletter you will find a brochure, which, although out of date, we would like you to pass on to friends, neighbours, or new arrivals in the area, encouraging them to subscribe.

Our 'pool' of active members remains at around 10% of the total membership and we need urgently to recruit more active millers. The work of looking after the mill needs to be shared amongst a greater number of people and we hope that many of you who have supported the Trust over the years will feel able to devote a few hours each year to active volunteering. Our volunteers help to run Open Days, assist with maintenance of the grounds and become involved with the important task of repairing and conserving the mill machinery, much of which is coming up to 200 years old. The commitment can be as little as a few hours a year. If you are interested, or know someone who might be, please be in contact. All contact details are included on the last page.

We are hoping to publicise the mill at the Cobham Farmers' Market on Saturday April 21st and would welcome help in manning our stall.

Interest in the Mill continues

Open Days

On our seven Open Days in 2008 we welcomed a steady stream of visitors of all ages, mostly from Cobham and the surrounding area, but a few from further afield or from abroad. The mill was open throughout Cobham Heritage Day in September and proved to be a very popular attraction. Towards the end of the day, a substantial and excited crowd gathered around the mill and on the banks of the Mole to watch the Duck Race and to cheer on the ducks that managed to make it to the boom at the end of the course.

The existing boom is no longer serviceable and the Trust is obtaining a new one, kindly donated by the Environment Agency. This will be available to the CCHT for use at the next duck race.

The Trust has also welcomed a few groups for private viewings and these have included local history societies, walkers, artists and mature students of History.

The Waitrose 'Green Token' Scheme

Last December, customers of the Cobham Waitrose store chose the CMPT to receive a substantial part of the monthly allocation of funds under the supermarket's Community Matters Scheme. This would indicate an ongoing interest in the mill by the community and a desire that it should be preserved. The Trust would like to thank all our members who dropped their green tokens into the appropriate box, and also Waitrose for its generous support of this local and important landmark.

The Mill features in a Postgraduate Dissertation.

Earlier this year, we were contacted by a young resident of East Horsley who is studying for an MA in Cultural Heritage at University College London. She confessed that until the CMPT appeared as part of the charity scheme in Waitrose, she did not know anything about the mill, despite regularly driving past. Her project is about how 'heritage value' is defined and the processes through which it gains these values. By focusing on the mill she intends to explore how the local community appreciates and uses local heritage sites, the rôle that the mill plays in the community and how it has become an icon of the town itself.

A round-up of news

Mill Lease.

As you may be aware, the mill building and the area immediately surrounding the mill are not owned by the Trust. They are under the stewardship of the Environment Agency, with which we have a very good working relationship, and are leased from the Agency for a nominal annual payment. For some considerable time our lease has been the subject of review and amendment, with the aim of defining more clearly the rights and responsibilities of the parties concerned. Needless to say, negotiations have not been straightforward, but the Trust has been fortunate to secure, through Elmbridge Voluntary Action, the services of a solicitor from a London law firm who is undertaking to act for us 'pro bono'.

Purchase of a new Parasol.

Following the death last year of his wife Anne, Paul Bryant established a fund in her memory to benefit the mill. After much deliberation it was decided that the fund would be used to improve the lot of those hardy volunteers who brave the sometimes inclement weather at the sales table, a task undertaken by Anne on many occasions. The old parasol is to be replaced with a new and larger one that can be quickly fitted with a back and sides should conditions demand. We hope that this will be installed in time for our May open day.

Maintaining the Mill

We mentioned in last year's newsletter that most of the 32 wooden paddles and their attachments to the waterwheel (starts) had been replaced. We are keeping a close eye on the few of the old ones remaining and will replace those in need of immediate attention before our first opening in April. The new starts are made in oak, which we believe will endure for longer than the elm ones that they replace. As last year, we remain very aware that some time in the not-too-distant future more extensive, and probably expensive, engineering work will have to be undertaken; parts of the mill machinery are 19th century in origin and are showing their age.

Since our last Open Afternoon in October 2008 the mill has been flooded on a number of occasions, once with the water rising above the floor level. Nevertheless, the winter months have again been put to good use. A new oak sluice has been constructed and installed to replace the rotting and leaky old one, and the pit drainage pump has also needed to be replaced. After all equipment has been reassembled and tested, the mill and its surrounds will need a thorough tidy up prior to our first Open Afternoon on Sunday 12th April.

All volunteers will be welcome!

The Mill Surrounds

Over the past few years it has been noticeable that many of the riverside willow trees had put on some considerable growth and their roots were causing extensive damage to the riverside footpath. These willow trees have been heavily cut back by the Environment Agency in an attempt to minimise this damage.

Last year, we made good use of the Probation Service, which supervises groups of Community Service (now called Community Payback) workers. They cleared weeds, trimmed overgrown vegetation and applied preservatives to the fencing and our picnic tables. They also tidied the adjoining landscaped area beyond the weirs and cleared the very considerable deposit of debris and sand which was left following heavy flooding. Unfortunately, much of the latter work was undone by the recent flooding and will need to be cleared once more, so no doubt we shall again be calling upon the Probation Service.

As during the latter part of last year, we will be employing some professional contractors to help with the maintenance of the grounds adjacent to the mill and the adjoining landscaped area beyond the weirs. This is in coordination with the Cobham Conservation and Heritage Trust who will be using the same contractors periodically to maintain the areas along the riverside footpath which is currently being strengthened and restored.

Pizza Express

You may be aware that Pizza Express is to open a new outlet in Anyards Road. We were contacted by their décor consultants with a view to the mill being the main local decorative feature. They proposed the mill machinery diagram as the centrepiece. Sadly, we have recently been informed that a change of mind has taken place and that the décor is to be based on Railton Cars which were at one time designed and built in the Cobham area.

The Future of Skilton's Yard

Since our last newsletter, further planning applications relating to this site have been submitted to Elmbridge Borough Council. The latest of these, which was subsequently withdrawn, proposed the conversion of the existing timber buildings into four flats only. We understand that discussions between the developers and Cobham Conservation and Heritage Trust have recently taken place. We hope that Millers will continue to take an interest in the future of Skilton's Yard, and express their views and concerns, as appropriate, to Elmbridge Borough Council.

Changes in Board membership in 2008.

Mr Malcolm Perry decided to leave the board to concentrate on his many other interests. Fortunately, he and his wife Sebra continue to be closely associated with the mill, Malcolm as a technician and Sebra as a member of the sales team. Both have given great service to the Trust over the years and Malcolm's technical expertise and his skill have been instrumental in the task of preserving and maintaining the machinery. We thank them both.

The Board was delighted to welcome back Mr Paul Bryant, a long time Director of the CMPT and a former Chairman. Paul had left the Board to care for his wife Anne. He was re-elected to the Board last June following Anne's death in January 2008.

Other matters and contact details

Group Visits to the Mill

We welcome group visits. They help to 'spread the word' about the importance of the mill to Cobham and, in the case of school parties, inform youngsters about their local heritage. So if you are associated with any group that may be interested in a visit, please encourage organisers to get in touch. **(See contact details below)**

Subscriptions 2009/10

The Annual Subscription for 2009/10, which still remains at a **minimum of £1 per person per year**, is due on 1st April. As always, any further donation you may care to make will help considerably toward the cost of the ongoing and future maintenance the Mill and would be very much appreciated.

It might be more convenient for you to place a **Standing Order** with your bank. Such a method is also much more convenient for the Trust. Enclosed with this newsletter is a form that can be used for direct cash or standing order payments. Receipts will only be issued if specifically requested.

If you are a taxpayer and have not completed one in the past, you can also assist the mill financially by completing the **Gift Aid Declaration** on the form. For every pound subscribed during the past four financial years, and in the future, a further sum can be reclaimed from H M Government.

Multiple subscription payments by some Millers

We continue to find that a number of Millers who pay their annual subscriptions by bank standing order have made more than one payment during the year. If this was their intention, then we thank them very much. For anyone who did not intend this, please check with your bank and amend the standing order instructions appropriately.

Do you use e-mail?

If you do and would in future be willing to receive subscription reminders and newsletters by e-mail simply send an e-mail to membership@cobhammill.org.uk, with a note to this effect. That's all you need to do.

Finally, from the Chairman.

Continuing the work of the Trust which was set up some 15 years ago to restore the derelict mill building, is a privilege. It could not be done without the support of our membership, especially the loyal volunteers. On behalf of the Trustees, I would like to thank you all. We would like to see more of you actively engaged in the work of the Trust particularly the younger ones amongst you. I hope that, if you are not already one of our volunteers, you will consider giving an hour or two a year to the preservation of the mill before disposing of this newsletter.

Board members

Richard Ward : Chairman

John Ball : Maintenance / Technical

Michael Measures : Deputy Chairman

Paul Bryant : Visits and Lectures

Harold Addicott: Hon. Treasurer

Mark Quinn : Security

Patricia Ward: Hon. Secretary and Publicity

Nita Rodd : Sales

Ken Green: Membership Secretary

Keith Simm : Roster / Organisation

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